Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

NEW Directions

March 19, 2007

Embarking on a Shared Journey Toward Stewardship

Stewardship involves managing toward an obligation to the future, senior managers heard at the March 7 *Stewardship in Action* leadership conference held to nurture the cultural transition the MOHLTC is undergoing.

"Stewardship is a very different type of leadership," Deputy Minister Ron Sapsford told senior managers at the gathering at the Harbour Castle Westin Hotel in Toronto. "Our purpose becomes much greater than what we need to accomplish today, but on what we have to accomplish tomorrow."

Sapsford told the conference it was important to reiterate the reasons underpinning the transition to stewardship. "Why this approach? We are going through transformation. Our system has to change at the delivery level – the pace of change in health care and the demands of an aging and growing population are self-evident."

These pressures on the health-care system require a structure where health-care decisions are driven by the health needs of people and their communities, he said. The government has chosen Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) as the vehicle to integrate and facilitate local delivery of health care. Focusing on a patient-centred approach, the system under LHINs holds the promise of better delivery, better service and better outcomes, Sapsford said.

This approach will enable the ministry to focus more on long-term strategy, priorities and systems outcomes. The shift to LHINs means that much of the day-to-day program management responsibilities that the ministry had has gone. It means the ministry is now in a position to offer a different kind of support and guidance to the health system. "We're now in a position to begin to remove the policy barriers and controls that have previously inhibited seamless access to health care and the integration of health-care services," Sapsford said.

"We need to make our contribution by letting people across the health system know what's expected of them at a high level and then letting them make their choices about how to do the work," he said.

"The implementation of stewardship will now require a huge change for all of us in the ministry."

On April 1, the statutory role of the LHINs and their responsibility to operationalize decision-making in the hands of local control will officially begin. "That's a seismic change for Ontario's health system and the people it serves. While we have led it with vision and strategy, the implementation of stewardship will now require a huge change for all of us in the ministry; a change in behaviour, in who we talk to, in what we talk about, and in how we spend time during our workday," Sapsford said.

The culture that is needed for the new way the ministry will do business requires a profound and fundamental shift in thinking, he said. Staff at all levels cannot continue to operate in future with a narrowly defined approach or focus. "There needs to be dialogue within teams, within divisions and across divisions," he said.

"We cannot continue the culture of 'wait to be told what to do.' We have to create an environment where staff are actively engaged in defining the work and accomplishing the goals. I see the environment as increasingly dynamic for the staff. People will able to participate in a variety of issues and topics," Sapsford said.

The ministry will function in cross-divisional teams and although one division will lead a topic, the work from concept to reality cannot happen without the specialized input of each division, Sapsford said. This means project management tools, cross-divisional accountabilities and choosing staff that have the skills to best reflect the needs of the topic, become an essential part of our management requirements.

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Members of the Ministry Management Committee share their views and respond to questions at the conference. From left: Ruth Hawkins, Acting ADM Public Health; Hugh MacLeod, ADM, Health System Accountability and Performance; Kevin Finnerty, Executive Director, Communications and Information Branch; Dawn Ogram, ADM, Corporate Support and Direct Services; Janice Crawford, Director of Legal Services; Adalsteinn Brown, ADM, Health System Strategy; John McKinley, ADM, Acute Services and Community Health; Deputy Minister Ron Sapsford; Dr. Joshua Tepper, ADM, Health Human Resources Strategy.

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The Deputy Minister said he recognizes that change cannot happen overnight and that change itself can be difficult and unsettling. But he said no one is going through the transition alone and part of the move to stewardship involves creating an environment where colleagues support each other.

Greater communication within the ministry is required for the cultural change to take hold and the very nature of our conversations must change as well, Sapsford explained.

In his remarks, Sapsford made reference to the principles for effective organizational transformation as presented earlier at the conference by Peter Block, an internationally renowned author and speaker on stewardship.

"I can't tell you the exact recipe for the success of stewardship. This is something we have to develop together."

Embarking on a Shared Journey Toward *Stewardship*

Block has developed six conversations to change organizational culture. These aim to:

- Focus on possibilities rather than just problem solving
- Champion/recognize gifts as opposed to underscoring deficiencies
- Seek commitment, rather than barter
- Embrace ownership, rather than assign blame
- Invite, rather than mandate
- Allow dissent as opposed to expecting lip service

Sapsford said these conversations would provide solid reference points as the ministry's staff puts stewardship into action. "As we begin to frame the challenge ahead, we will develop a greater level of understanding of the stewardship principles."

Partnership is a key component of stewardship, Sapsford told the conference. "We can no longer do business on the basis of large program divisions, but must proceed on the basis of active partnerships among the divisions on health-care issues."

"This idea of partnership applies not only to how we work with each other inside the ministry, but also how we relate to partners external to the ministry," he said.

Fostering honest relationships founded on joint accountability leads to working relationships based on partnership. Stewardship calls for people at all levels of the ministry to collaborate and work together on the basis of a partnership, and less on the basis of hierarchy, Sapsford said. "Partnership versus hierarchy is part and parcel of becoming able stewards of Ontario's health-care system. Partnership is the key to stewardship in action. Stewardship involves a partnership among ourselves as well as partnerships with others outside the ministry," he said.

Moving forward, stewardship will require staff to approach their work from the standpoint of joint accountability, Sapsford said. "We are all accountable for everything, both inside and outside the ministry. We have to learn to stay engaged while others take a greater role in the health-care system."

"The stove-pipe approach to who is accountable for what must be gone," Sapsford said. "We all have to be accountable for the ministry and the health system we create."

Being jointly accountable, leaves no room for abdication, the Deputy Minister said. It means taking ownership and it demands the end of territoriality.

Absolute honesty is another important ingredient of partnerships, Sapsford said. Part of the ministry's role as stewards

Senior managers listen to Deputy Minister Ron Sapsford describe the staff partnerships that must be forged for stewardship to thrive.

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involves communicating harsh truths that other players in the health-care system and within government may not always want to hear. "It's difficult to be forthright, but it is an important part of stewardship."

Partnership also opens up opportunities to express dissent, Sapsford said. "Partners can also say no to one another. Being able to disagree stimulates dialogue. It leads to better decisions. It doesn't mean we always win the argument. It means we have a voice in the discussion that leads to decision-making."

Sapsford said he is counting on senior managers as well as staff at all levels of the ministry to keep questioning and challenging how things can be improved as the transition progresses, to make sure the changes are being implemented in the most effective manner.

"I need people to raise questions: 'What things have we not thought of? What have I not thought of? Why are we doing things in this way? Why am I doing it this way'?"

"I'm not a magician…I do not have all the answers," Sapsford said. "Staff has to actively engage to find answers and act as if it is their ministry of health and not just mine. This is something we have to develop together," he said.

Conference participants shared their perspectives on stewardship and the transition—their hopes as well as their doubts.

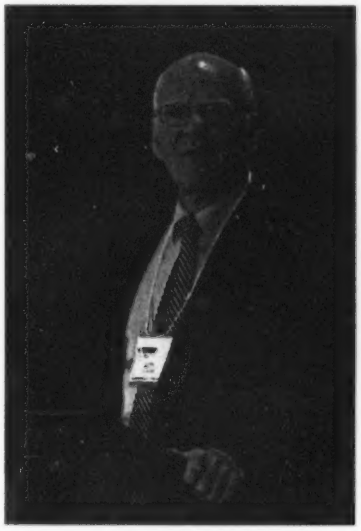
"I was struck by the consistency of the anxiety, the fear, the apprehension of not really knowing what this journey is about," said Hugh MacLeod, Assistant Deputy Minister for Health System Accountability and Performance, who facilitated one of the day's group discussions. MacLeod said some of the anxiety in his group gave way to a sense of hope because participants were being given the opportunity, some felt for the first time, to voice their concerns.

"You can only be sure of changing yourself."

"I believe relationships will flourish when we get to stewardship. People will be forced to bump into each other and begin occupying the white spaces on the organizational chart," MacLeod said.

Dawn Ogram, Assistant Deputy Minister for Corporate Support and Direct Services, another group facilitator, said she was impressed by the way in which participants in her group had begun to talk about examples of stewardship already underway in many of the ministry's branches. "It is exciting to see people reflecting on the challenges and the opportunities of stewardship by speaking about their own experience," Ogram said. "It helps make the concept concrete, helps people translate what it means for them and their role in supporting a culture of stewardship."

Deputy Minister Ron Sapsford tells senior managers that partnership and joint accountability are key components of stewardship.



Deputy Minister Ron Sapsford told the conference he sees the ministry becoming an increasingly dynamic place to work under stewardship.

Above left: Debbi Leone, Client Services Specialist, HR Strategy and Ministry Transition, shares her perspective with Sian Rees-Jones, Acting Manager Client Services, Human Resources Branch during small group breakout sessions at the conference.

Adalsteinn Brown, Assistant Deputy Minister of Health System Strategy said in the group he facilitated, he heard the message: "We can believe in the transition, but we can also have some concerns and doubts. People also started coming out with some of the strengths that can help us meet some of the challenges we'll face."

Assistant Deputy Minister of Transition Debbie Fischer said, "Now is the time to start conveying some of this important information about stewardship and its implications to your staff. It means increasing the opportunities you have to talk with your staff. It's up to each of us to take responsibility for our actions and to use our leadership skills to champion stewardship."

Fischer told the audience that true change has to start at the individual level. "You can only be sure of changing yourself. Changing how people in the ministry think about the work they do and its impact on the public, that's what we're asking you to do—one by one—to make stewardship happen."

Throughout the day, a number of managers raised the question: "How do we start getting the message to staff at all levels across the ministry?"

Both the Deputy Minister and Fischer said that spreading the message beyond the conference walls was everyone's responsibility. "You have to start the dialogue with staff to help us disseminate the message," Fischer said. "There will be ongoing development opportunities, but through this senior group we can start the dialogue."

"It's you who will energize your staff. It's you who will excite them about the possibilities and potentials of work in the ministry and the contribution they can make to that work," Fischer said.

In wrapping up the conference, Sapsford reiterated that stewardship is a concept that applies to the ministry as a whole. "It doesn't matter where you are in the ministry: you can apply the stewardship principles," Sapsford said

"Today is an opportunity to consider the very nature of leadership and the kind of environment that nurtures it. I can't do this transition alone; I need all of you to consider your relationships and to work with me as my partners." ■

An Action Plan

to Foster a Stewardship Culture

New programs and supports to assist ministry staff through the transition to a stewardship culture are being developed, Assistant Deputy Minister of Transition Debbie Fischer told senior managers.

At the March 7 stewardship conference Fischer discussed the results of recent Readiness Assessment surveys and focus groups with ministry staff and the challenges that must be overcome as the ministry moves toward stewardship.

"What we've found out from these surveys and focus groups is that while we've achieved a fair amount, there's still plenty of work ahead of us," Fischer said. "This is not surprising. This is a big organization—the biggest in Ontario's government—and it's undergoing a big reorganization."

Fischer said she was pleased at the rate of staff response to the readiness assessment because it was much higher than the norm for these types of surveys, reflecting the high level of staff interest in the transition.

The results of the surveys and focus groups reveal a number of positives:

- There is a general feeling among all groups that although the transition process is taking a long time, it is due to the ministry's efforts in trying to get it right
- There is strong awareness among all employee groups that this change is a far more complex than any in the past
- There is high recognition among all employee groups of the *New Directions* newsletter as a transition communication vehicle

The surveys also point to some challenges. While the vast majority of senior managers expressed a high level of understanding of the ministry's transition objectives and how it fits into the stewardship model, this was not reflected in other staff levels of the ministry. Results of the surveys and focus groups also indicate the need for enhanced communication, more emphasis on cultural change and greater staff involvement. A summary of the internal readiness assessment results can be found on INFOweb, the ministry's intranet site, at ***http://intra.moh.gov.on.ca/PageFactory.aspx?PageID=2039***.

Assistant Deputy Minister of Transition Debbie Fischer updates conference participants on the results of the Readiness Assessment surveys, which have informed the ministry's action plan to support a stewardship culture.

Based on staff input, Fischer acknowledged that it is time to focus more on:

- Developing the cultural side of the transition
- Engaging staff in the stewardship transition process
- Engaging staff to take accountability for stewardship
- Improving communications

In order to begin to address the feedback indicated by the results, the ministry has planned a number of cultural and communication programs to assist employees at all levels to gain a better understanding of the rationale and objectives behind the transition.

"We have—and will continue to have—a strong commitment to learning and development opportunities for you," Fischer said.

Fischer said that the ministry has partnered with the Schulich School of Business at York University to provide an on-going learning experience for senior managers to support the transition to a new ministry culture. The Schulich School's Executive Education Centre will deliver a *Stewardship in Action* Leadership Development Program to help senior managers lead and drive the stewardship model and values.

The program will be available to ministry senior managers during the next 18-24 months. "The program is really to help leaders undertake the stewardship model. Learning modules will support the development of competencies, such as systems thinking and working in a networked environment," Fischer explained. The leadership modules in the Schulich program will be augmented by action learning opportunities i.e., work dealing with current issues and real life challenges the ministry is facing.

"The action learning projects will involve cross-divisional project teams and will be supported and mentored by Schulich faculty. The program will help staff to solidify a culture of empowerment, personal accountability and innovation," Fischer said.

The ministry also plans to launch regional All-Staff Dialogues in the fall to engage ministry staff at all levels in shaping the transition. Stewardship awareness workshops will also be made available to all staff starting in the spring.

Workshops will be offered both as open sessions for staff to register individually or as targeted sessions for intact work groups. Team development workshops will also be available to assist in developing new teams, managing existing teams and building horizontal or cross-functional teams.

Increased communications with staff about the transition has been a focus over the last few months and will continue. Articles are planned for upcoming *New Directions* that cover a range of topics including, updates on the various areas of the ministry and success stories illustrating the stewardship model as well as learning and development updates.

Divisions are developing communication plans to keep staff informed of transition related changes, some initiatives include newsletters, and greater use of intranet sites to increase staff communications about the stewardship transition.

Fischer said the ministry will continue to conduct ongoing staff surveys and will continue to respond to feedback and make readjustments accordingly as the transition progresses. Appropriate programs and supports will be provided as required.

Navigating a major transition presents challenges. But through partnership and support a stewardship culture will become a reality in the ministry, Fischer said.

"I know you can rise to the challenge and I assure you that we'll work together to make that happen." ■

OHISC is on the Move

Responsibility for the Ontario Health Informatics Standards Council (OHISC) Secretariat is moving from the Smart Systems for Health Agency to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care on April 1. The OHISC is the authority which recommends health informatics standards in Ontario.

Informatics standards are accepted rules or formats that enable a consistent exchange of data across the health-care system. These standards lead to better and more useful data, which benefits health-care providers and ultimately patients in Ontario.

Taking on the responsibility for setting provincial informatics standards is in alignment with the ministry's role as steward of the health-care system.

OHISC's membership and work plan will not be affected by the move. The ministry is working to ensure that the OHISC Secretariat transition will be in place with the Health System Information Management Division on April 1 to help for a seamless transition of support for OHISC. ■

OHISC looks forward to continuing the success as a contributor to an integrated Ontario health care system. The council's website will remain (www.OHISC.on.

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